

SHADOW REPORT

FROM MONITORING WORK
AND EFFECTS OF
THE SECTOR WORKING
GROUP ON AGRICULTURE
AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

January – December 2021





THROUGH
DIALOGUE **TO**
EU

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WORK AND EFFECTS OF
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AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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ЕВРОТИНК  **EUROTHINK**
ЦЕНТАР ЗА ЕВРОПСКИ СТРАТЕГИИ CENTER FOR EUROPEAN STRATEGIES
евротинк

SHADOW REPORT FROM MONITORING WORK AND EFFECTS OF THE SECTOR WORKING GROUP ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE PERIOD JANUARY – DECEMBER 2021

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ИЗВЕШТАЈ ВО СЕНКА ОД СЛЕДЕЊЕТО НА РАБОТАТА И ЕФЕКТИТЕ НА СЕКТОРСКАТА РАБОТНА ГРУПА ЗА ЗЕМЈОДЕЛСТВО И РУРАЛЕН РАЗВОЈ ЈАНУАРИ – ДЕКЕМВРИ 2021

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FOREWORD

SUMMARY ON PERFORMANCE OF SECTOR WORKING GROUPS IN 2021

Shadow Reports from Monitoring Work and Effects of Sector Working Groups in 2019, 2020 and 2021 were developed under the hypothesis that SWGs are important bodies responsible for sector policy creation and monitoring in the Republic of North Macedonia and serve as forum for coordination of donor support for policy implementation.

The sector-wide approach was indicated as comprehensive approach for IPA II, used to assess and determine the state's qualification level in terms of utilization of IPA assistance for full sector support, and was followed by formation of sector working groups over the period 2015-2020. With the start of IPA III programming for the period 2021-2027, institutions continued the sector-wide approach and operation of sector working groups.

While, in formal terms, sector working groups have potential to be policy makers in relevant sectors, SWG monitoring findings in 2021 indicate to regression in terms of their functionality, civil society participation and effects from their work. Modest improvement is noted in respect to transparency in operation, having in mind that institutions responded to more than 85% of information requests made under the instrument for free access to public information, accounting for an improvement by more than 4% compared to 2020. Openness is also noted in terms of increased communication, especially because in 2021 representatives from all 12 SWGs accepted invitations for interview with the project team that monitors their work and performance.

Based on the analysis of meetings held by SWGs, total of 251 responses made by institutions under the instrument for free access to public information, 12 interviews with

IPA coordinators and discussions with 26 civil society organizations that participate in sector groups, flagship monitoring findings on performance of SWGs in 2021 concern the following:



- In 2021, SWGs held a total of 11 plenary sessions and 8 operational meetings, representing a decrease compared to 2020 findings, when they held a total of 19 plenary sessions and 21 operational meetings.
- None from 12 SWGs has complied with the minimum number of plenary sessions on annual level stipulated in their respective rules of procedure or draft rules of procedure, while 4 sector groups¹ did not hold any plenary session during 2021.
- In the case of 5 from 12 sector groups, civil society organizations have not participated in SWG work during 2021. In the case of 4 SWGs, civil society participation was absent due to the fact that the relevant sector group has not held any meeting, while one sector group has not invited civil society organizations to participate in its work.²
- SWGs that have held plenary session and invited civil society organizations to attend these meeting did not fully update data on civil society representatives resulting in invitations being sent to erroneous or non-existing e-mail addresses, which additionally narrows the space for civil society participation.
- Although IPA III Regulation anticipates that civil society organizations should be given space for meaningful participation in IPA programming and sector policy development, in the practice there is no actual space for substantial engagement of civil society organizations during plenary sessions and involvement of civil society representatives in operational meetings organized by SWGs.
- While donor coordination is anticipated as part of activities performed by sector working groups, the monitoring tools did not observe agenda items for SWG meetings held in 2021 that focus on donor coordination matters.

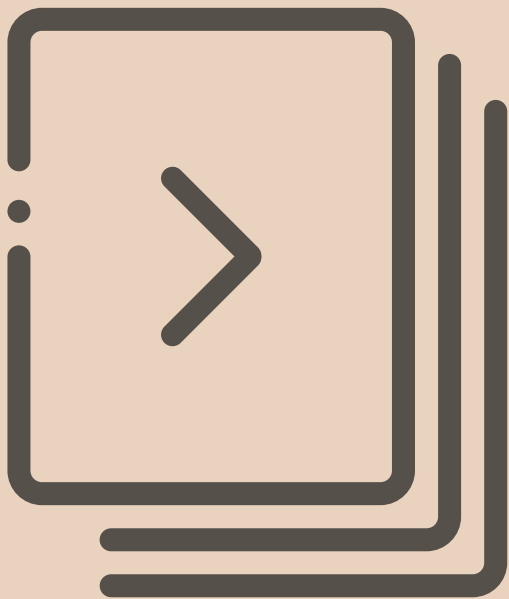
¹ SWG Justice, SWG Public Administration Reform, SWF Roma Integration and SWG Home Affairs

² SWG Competitiveness and Innovation

Based on the established state-of-play, encouraging steps have been made in 2021 towards enhanced structural dialogue. In particular, the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA) initiated the process for amending the rules of procedures for SWGs in order to improve their overall performance and regulate civil society and donor participation. During interviews with representatives from competent institutions it was underlined that they are open to changing the rules of procedure with a view to regulate participation and role of civil society organizations in greater details. Expectations are that predictability of SWG dynamics and functionality will be improved in 2022, by creating the indicative calendar for meetings of all SWGs and by publishing information on phases for future IPA programming, as well as relevant documents for sector policies. Based on responses obtained from civil society organizations, evident is the request for their participation at the level of technical meetings that would allow them to be involved in all stages of policy development and adoption.

HOW TO MOVE FORWARD?

SEA must urgently open consultations around the new rules of procedures for SWGs, which should include provisions that improve meaningful participation of civil society organizations, primary by ensuring availability and access to materials and information of operational nature, as well as by organizing inception training for new representatives to ensure thorough understanding of sector policy processes and IPA programming. These trainings should also target civil society representatives from Sector Monitoring Committees. The new rules of procedure should regulate in details the procedure for selection and work of civil society representatives, including the method for consultations with the broader civil society. Adherent actions are needed to implement plans aimed at improving participation, work predictability and transparency of SWGs.



GENERAL INFORMATION

SECTOR WORKING GROUP ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

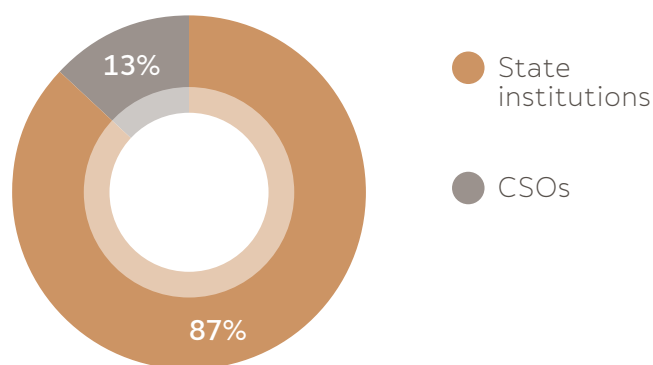
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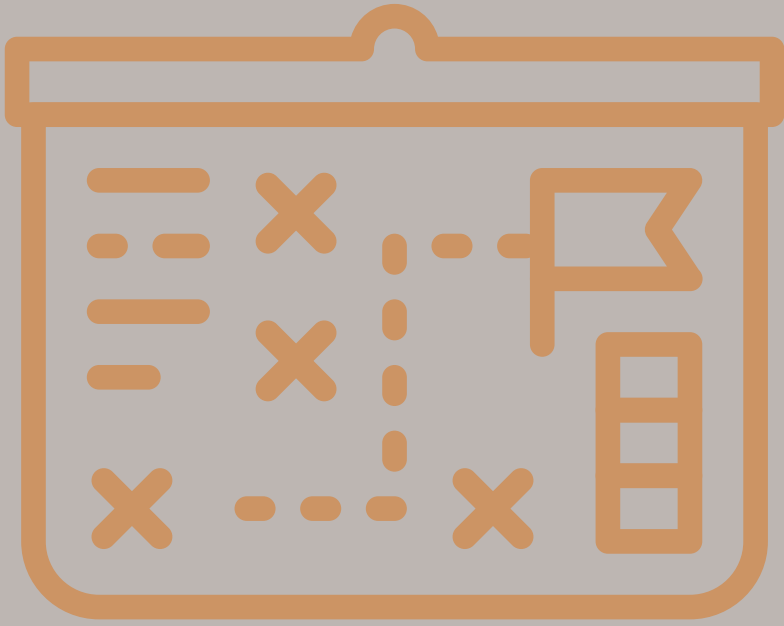
NUMBER OF SWG MEMBERS: 23, institutions x 20 members, civil society organizations x 3 members

NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD IN 2021: one plenary session on 17.02.2021

SWG CHAIR: Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy

CHART 1.
Distribution of various representatives in SWG Agriculture and Rural Development





METHODOLOGY APPROACH

For the purpose of this report, the project team combined several research methods for data collection, processing and analysis. First, the project team conducted a desk research of information available on official websites of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy (MAFWE), Secretariat for European Affairs and IPARD Agency, followed by submission of freedom of information requests and organization of interviews with relevant collocutors.

The desk research component included in-depth analysis of documents, laws and strategies that are of significance for this sector working group (*for more information see: **BIBLIOGRAPHY***). Moreover, the project team submitted **22 freedom of information requests** to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy as the institution competent for operation of this sector group. Responses to all information requests were disclosed beyond the deadline stipulated in the Law on Free Access to Public Information.

For the purpose of this research, the project team conducted one interview with IPA coordinator and three representatives from the ministry's department on EU affairs.³ In addition, another interview was organized with a representative from civil society organizations that participate in SWG Agriculture and Rural Development, i.e. from the Macedonian Ecological Society.⁴

According to the monitoring methodology, performance of sector working groups is assessed in respect to five segments:

- SWG functionality;
- civil society participation in SWG;
- CSO capacity for contribution and participation in SWG;
- effects from SWG work; and
- IPA.

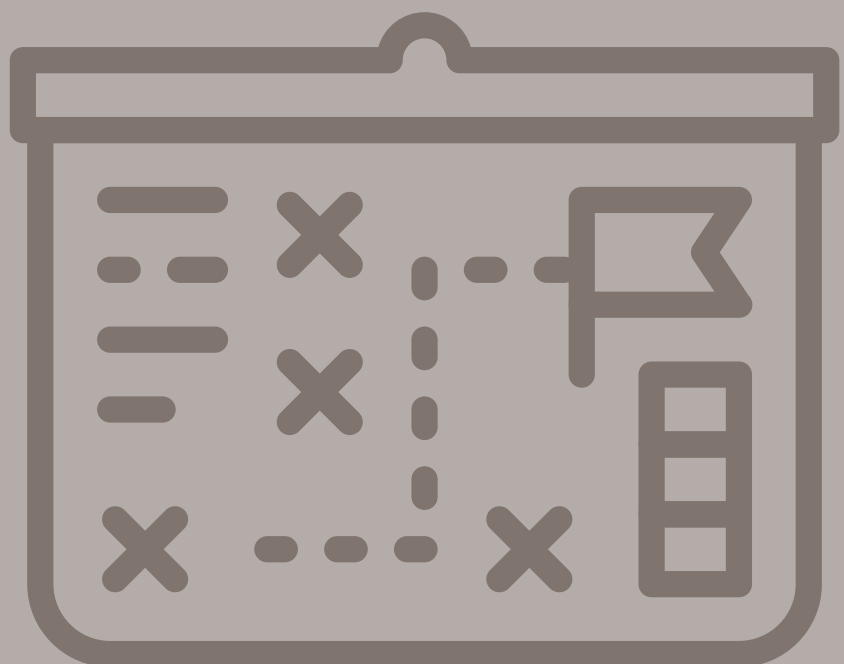
³ Interview with representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy was conducted on 03.02.2022.

⁴ Interview with representative from the Macedonian Ecological Society was conducted on 28.01.2022.



Based on the methodology for monitoring work and effects of sector working groups, performance of SWGs in all these five segments is measured against 31 standards and 21 indicators. Scores calculated for these standards (1 is the lowest and 3 is the highest) are used to assess progress in work of all 12 sector working groups at annual level.

Nevertheless, having in mind that five of twelve SWGs did not hold plenary sessions in 2021 and given that most standards and indicators are directly related to SWG meetings, unlike last years, this monitoring report does not include scores for individual segments of SWG performance. This method is applied to all SWGs, including those that have held plenary sessions in 2021, in order to maintain same approach to assessment for all 12 sector working groups.





PART 1

SECTOR POLICIES

In 2021, MAFWE was focused on internal processes and several draft documents that are closely related to the sector on agriculture and rural development. In December 2020, MAFWE finalized the **National Strategy on Agriculture and Rural Development**, adopted by the Government in January 2021.

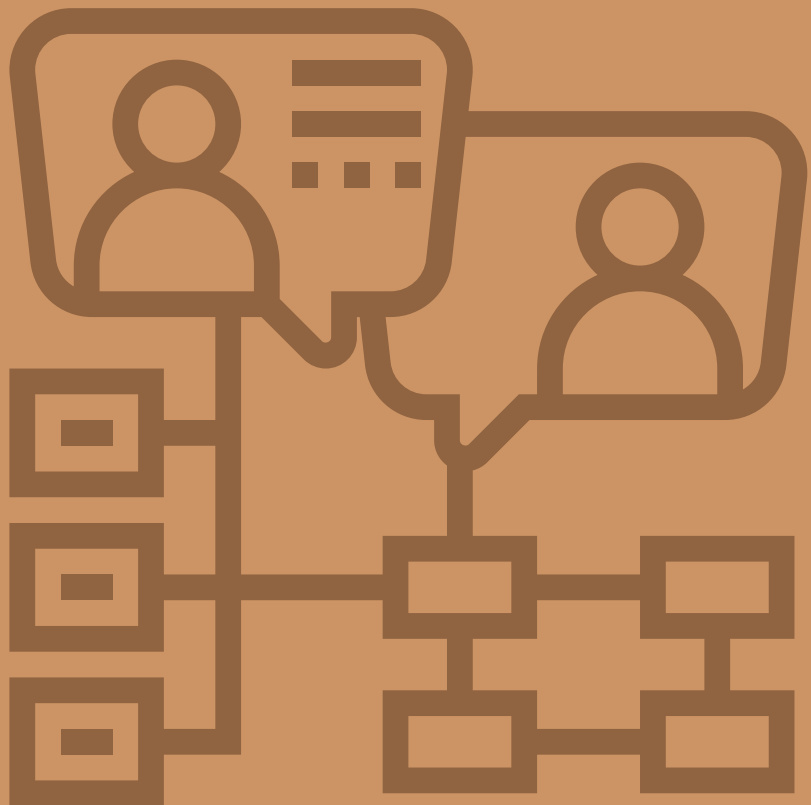
Other adopted documents include: **2021 Program on Financial Assistance to Agriculture**, **2021 Program on Financial Support to Rural Development** and **2021 Program on Capital Subsidies for Development of Planning Regions in the Field of Agriculture and Rural Development**.

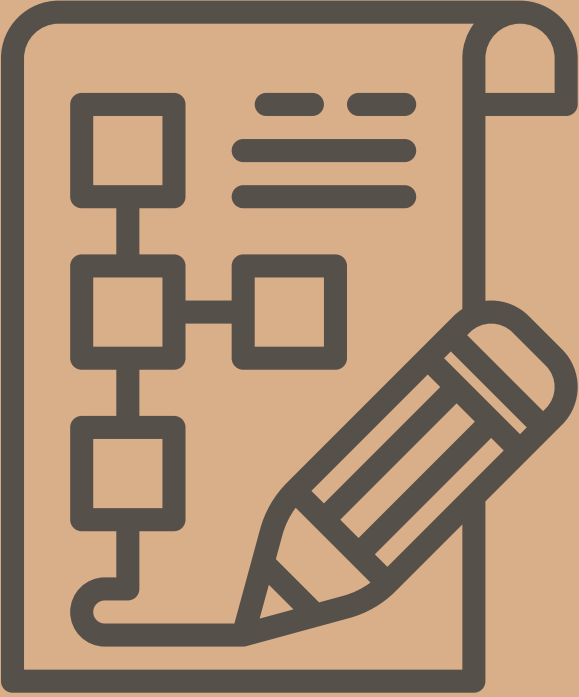
In response to challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, 2021 activities included adoption of the **Law on Financial Support to Mitigate Consequences from the COVID-19 Pandemic on Production and Bulk Sale of Agriculture Produce**. Other legislative activities included amendments to several laws, as follows: **Law on Amending the Law on Agriculture and Rural Development**, **Law on Amending the Law on Financial Support to Mitigate Consequences from the COVID-19 Pandemic on Production and Bulk Sale of Grapes, and Wine Industry**, **Law on Amending the Law on Agriculture Land**, **Law on Amending the Law on Organic Agriculture Production**, **Law on Amending the Law on Cattle Breeding**, **Law on Amending the Law on Consolidation of Agriculture Land**, **Law on Amending the Law on Tobacco, Tobacco and Other Related Products** and **Law on Amending the Law on Quality of Agriculture**



Produce. Underway is development of new law on fisheries and aquacultures. Also, activities have started on drafting the new law on organic agriculture produce for which relevant working group was formed. **Law on Zootechnic** is already developed and entered parliamentary procedure.

At the same time, in 2021, the Strategy on Forestry was amended, while the twinning project on fisheries entered the evaluation stage.





PART 2

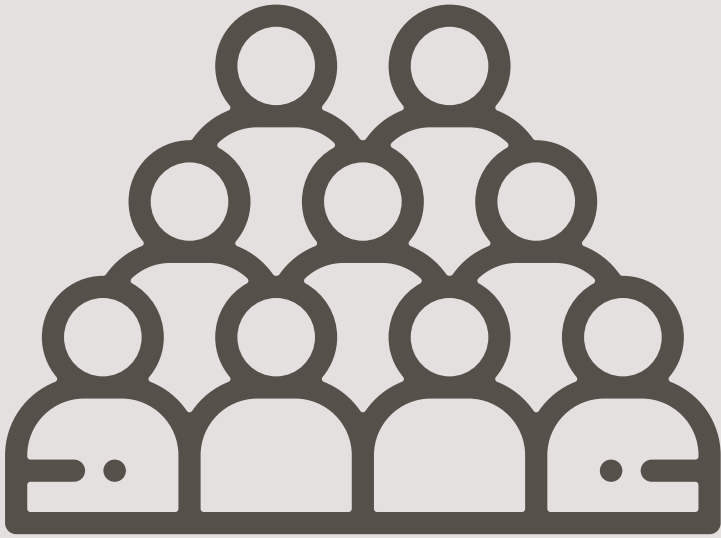
SWG FUNCTIONALITY

2.1 RULES OF PROCEDURE

SWG Agriculture and Rural Development has own draft rules of procedure, but these are the general rules applicable to all SWGs, which should have served as model that should be adjusted to individual sector groups. The document disclosed by MAFWE is not specifically developed for SWG Agriculture and Rural Development and includes annexes that enlist state and international institutions relevant for all SWGs. The situation in respect to the rules of procedure has not changed compared to the last year (2020). Representatives from MAFWE reported they have been involved in the process for amending the rules of procedure that was initiated by the Secretariat for European Affairs and, just as the interviewed civil society representative, expressed satisfaction and assessed this development as positive. From the civil society perspective, it is important for the new rules of procedure to be clear, to include well-defined goals and objectives, and to better regulate the role of civil society organizations in SWGs.

2.2 ANNUAL PLAN

Just as other SWGs, SWG Agriculture and Rural Development has not developed annual work plan. However, collocutors believe that development of such plan would be very useful in respect to planning and implementation of activities for all sector working groups.



PART 3

CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

Three SWG members are representatives from civil society organizations with the status of full-fledged members. In 2021, the list of CSOs represented in this sector group was not changed and includes:

- Macedonian Ecological Society (MES);
- Association for Agricultural Economists;
- Eurothink – Center for European Strategies.

On the account of internal organizational changes, representatives from Eurothink and Association of Agricultural Economist did not attend the only plenary session held by this sector group, although all civil society representatives were neatly invited. Both associations expressed interest to actively join SWG work in the future, especially due to the fact that they cooperate with MAFWE in other capacities and instances.

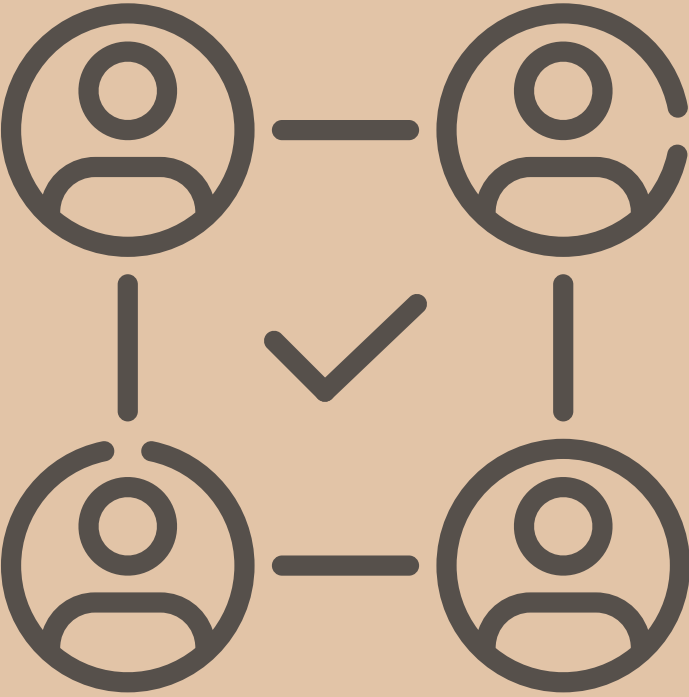
From the list of invited CSOs, disclosed by MAFWE in response to submitted information request, it could be concluded that many more civil society organizations have been invited to attend SWG meeting, not only those that are formal members. This



list includes 27 CSOs, some of which operate at national level (Network for Rural Development of the Republic of North Macedonia, Macedonian Association of Agriculture Holdings, Federation of Farmers, etc.), others are international organizations (UNDP, UN Women, FAO, UNICEF, etc.) and foreign development agencies (GIZ, SIDA, USAID, etc.).

Civil society representatives regularly receive invitations for SWG meetings, including minutes compiled from meetings held. The manner in which SWG meetings are organized allows all members to share their opinions and actively join discussions, and to put forward proposals, recommendations, and have direct access to sector policy processes.





PART 4

CSO CAPACITY

As regards the capacity of three CSOs that participate in SWG Agriculture and Rural Development, MES has extensive, decades-long experience with programs and projects that are closely linked to this sector and has participated in several working groups and initiatives related to MAFWE. Despite its in-depth knowledge in the field of agriculture economy, the Association of Agricultural Economists was not active in the last several years and therefore capacity of this organizations (having in mind that it includes experienced staff from the Faculty of Agriculture Sciences) was not utilized. However, it should be noted that currently there is enthusiasm to change this situation. The third organization, Eurothink, has small and limited capacity in respect to SWG work, while its experience remains focused in the field of fighting environmental crime, with special emphasis on illegal timbering. In their opinion, all civil society organizations believe that their role could be enhanced in the futures, which is closely related to expectations from the new rules of procedure. In this regard, the emphasis was put on the need for precise definition of their role and expectations in relation to SWG work, and possibility to send replacement members from the same organization when appointed representatives are unable to attend SWG meetings.

Furthermore, representative from civil society organizations and representatives from MAFWE agree about the need to increase the number of CSOs (3 to 5) in the future, having in mind necessary areas of expertise that would be covered. Hence, increased number of CSOs in SWG Agriculture and Rural Development should include representatives from associations of farmers, i.e. those that are dealing with these issues on daily basis, in addition to organizations that have relevant experts and civil activists.



PART 5

EFFECTS FROM SWG WORK

According to the general draft rules of procedure, SWG Agriculture and Rural Development should meet at least once every month. However, as indicated above, this sector group held only one plenary session on **17.02.2021** as online event, via the platform Webex.

This meeting included presentation of Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) Indicators, as defined under IPA III strategic responses in this sector and concerning future assistance from the EU and other donors, as well as presentation of the new National Strategy on Agriculture and Rural Development 2021-2027. This strategy document is comprised of measures and interventions that address the need for adaptation of agriculture policies based on relevant situational analyses, especially in respect to the EU integration process. The agriculture minister emphasized that work of this sector group has produced well-defined and clearly formulated indicators that adequately describe the context and will ensure possibilities for rigorous monitoring of progress achieved, in order to ensure successful IPA programming and definition of future priorities.

Moreover, the meeting included presentation of IPA III strategic responses, with all 49 indicators and targets in line with the National Strategy 2021-2027. Several indicators were discussed in greater details, including the need to revise, for example,



those related to increasing competitiveness of agriculture and agri-food production in North Macedonia on the international market, which refer to the number of farmers that are part of holdings; those related to elimination of risks on animal and public health; and those related to risks on health of plants, animal and people and the environment that are result of agriculture activities.

In addition to SWG members, invitations to attend the plenary session were sent to experts from the academia, representatives from civil society organizations and international organizations, whereby it could be stressed that discussions had been productive and at high level, with specific and relevant guidelines for further development.

PART 6

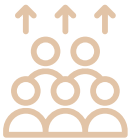
INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE IPA III (2021-2027)

The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) concerns the programming period 2021 - 2027. The European Commission introduced this instrument together with the new EU multiannual financial framework. IPA III was introduced with adoption of the Regulation on Establishing the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance and the Regulation on Implementing Rules and Principles for IPA III⁵ by the European Union, and is coherent with other funds, programmes and instruments of the Union, primarily the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument.

According to its structure, IPA III is organized around five thematic priorities, i.e. windows:

1. Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights and Democracy;
2. Good Governance, Acquis Alignment, Good Neighbourly Relations and Strategic Communication;

5 Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) COM/2018/465 final



3. Green Agenda and Sustainable Connectivity;
4. Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth;
5. Territorial and Cross-Border Cooperation

For more information on IPA III programming (2021-2027) see the report [IPA: Cross-Cutting Issue](#).

6.1 IPA III PROGRAMMING (2021-2027) IN THE SECTOR ON AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

IPA III funds anticipated for the sector on agriculture and rural development are part of WINDOW 4: Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth, thematic priority 1: Agriculture and Rural Development. 2021 action document in this sector “EU for Green Economy” anticipates a total budget of 33.35 million euros, of which 25.85 million euros are IPA contribution. Action fiches are not developed for the action “EU for Sustainable Agriculture and Fisheries”, which is planned for implementation in 2023 and 2024, meaning that at the moment this action is addressed with strategy indicators in the earliest stage and they can be subject to changes in the future.

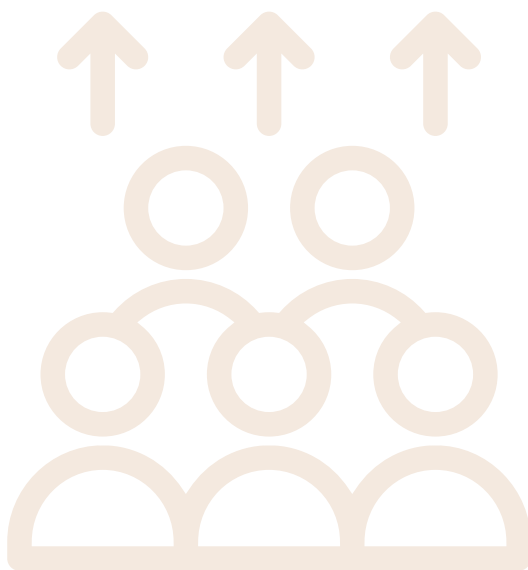


TABLE 1:
IPA III programming (2021-2027) in the
sector on agriculture and rural development

WINDOW 4:
COMPETITIVENESS AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

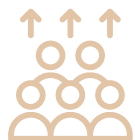
Thematic priority 3: Agriculture and Rural Development

Implementation period: 2021

Action	Estimated total budget (million EUR)	Requested contribution from IPA (million EUR)	Implementation plan/ arrangement
<u>EU for Green Economy</u>	33.35	25.85	This action will be implemented under direct management, through contracts (procurements and services) and one grant. The action document was submitted in March 2021, and the European Commission adopted the implementing decision in December 2021.

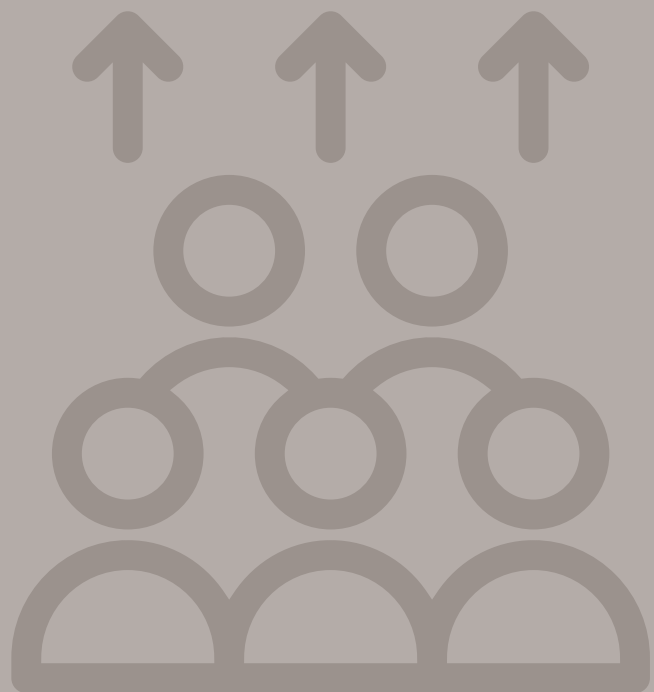
Implementation period: 2023 and 2024

<u>EU for Sustainable Agriculture and Fisheries</u>	10.0	9.0	Direct management
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**TABLE 2****2021 Action Document “EU for Green Economy”**

2021 ACTION DOCUMENT “EU FOR GREEN ECONOMY”		
Expected outcomes	EU contribution (EUR)	Indicative third party contribution
1. Greening Business Facility established	20,150,000	7,000,000
2. Enhanced cooperation and position of farmers in the supply chain	5,650,000	500,000
Contingencies	50,000	
Total	25,850,000	7,500,000

A novelty under IPA III is the fact that all projects will be managed centrally, i.e. the EU Delegation to the Republic of North Macedonia will be the contracting authority. Openness of data on the implementation status of activities under IPA III is of exceptional importance for regular monitoring and greater involvement of stakeholders. Hence, in 2021, the Ministry of Health and all other institutions involved in implementation of activities under IPA III have appointed person responsible for updating PAF Indicators on the specially designed website for that purpose. However, although implementation of IPA III activities has already started, the website is still not active.





PART 7

GENDER MAINSTREAM IN SECTOR WORKING GROUPS

Gender mainstreaming is a process for systematic consideration of implications on women and men from a planned action, including legislation, policy or program, in any area and at all levels.⁶ In that, the ultimate goal is to achieved gender equality. Within the national legislation of the Republic of North Macedonia, gender mainstreaming is defined under the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men⁷ and represents an obligation for all state bodies and institutions. Failure to incorporate the gender perspective implies adoption of gender-neutral or gender-blind policies that are unable to address existing inequalities and could contribute to deepened gender gaps.

Gender equality is among core values of the European Union.⁸ At the same time, EU membership is conditioned with respect and promotion of fundamental European values.⁹ The Instrument for

⁶ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Glossary and Thesaurus, A-Z Index, available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1185?lang=mk>

⁷ Article 4, paragraph (1), item 10) of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, “Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia” no. 6/12, 30/13, 166/14, 150/15 and “Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia” no. 53/21.

⁸ Article 2 of the consolidated version of the Treaty on the European Union, available at: <https://bit.ly/3s4gyjR>

⁹ Ibid. Article 49, paragraph (1)



Pre-accession Assistance in the period 2021-2027 (IPA III) stipulates that implementation of IPA III should be led by the principles of gender equality and enhanced rights of women and girls,¹⁰ in line with and aimed at attaining the minimum standards established under the EU's new Gender Action Plan 2021-2025 (GAP III) titled "An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action".¹¹ GAP III is organized into five pillars and the third pillar anticipates activities in six key areas of engagement.¹² Moreover, GAP III reflects goals and objectives defined under the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025.¹³ On the other hand, IPA III defines gender equality as specific objective, but also thematic priority eligible for support.¹⁴ In that, it is stressed that gender equality is a cross-cutting issue that should be adequately reflected and integrated in the overall implementation process.¹⁵ Goals of IPA III assistance under the thematic priority on gender equality fully correspond to six areas of engagement from GAP III, which provides an additional indicator for the need for these two documents to be linked. On that account, work within sector groups - that represent forums for interdepartmental cooperation and are competent for creating and implementing national policies and programming, monitoring and evaluating foreign aid - should be guided by and aligned with GAP III. Finally, due consideration should be made of the EU's commitment that, by 2025, at least 85% of all new external actions should include gender equality as important or general goal.¹⁶

An important element of the sector approach to gender mainstreaming is building and enhancing technical competences of all stakeholders

- ¹⁰ Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III), available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R1529&qid=1643627286827&from=en>
- ¹¹ EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III – An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/join_2020_17_en_final.pdf
- ¹² Ibid. GAP III anticipates activities grouped into six thematic areas: ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence; promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights; strengthening economic and social rights and empowerment of girls and women; advancing equal participation and leadership; implementing the women, peace and security agenda; addressing challenges and harnessing opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation.
- ¹³ A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152>
- ¹⁴ Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III), available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R1529&qid=1643627286827&from=en>
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III – An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/join_2020_17_en_final.pdf

involved in implementation of sector policies.¹⁷ Hence, equal importance is assigned to capacity building on gender mainstreaming among policy makers, but also among people involved in policy implementation.

For more information, see [Shadow Report on Gender Mainstreaming in Sector Working Groups](#).

7.1 GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN SWG AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

For the third year in a row, shadow reports note that SWG Agriculture and Rural Development integrates the gender perspective in its work. The only meeting held by this sector group on 17.02.2021 featured review of documents with integrated gender perspective, i.e. IPA III strategic response and National Strategy and Rural Development 2021-2027 adopted on 20.01.2021. Moreover, gender perspective is integrated in the last action document developed by this sector group for IPA III 2021 programme, i.e. EU for Green Economy, wherein gender equality is identified as priority objective.

In 2021, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy (MAFWE) has not organized any trainings on gender-responsive operation. On the other hand, it should be that SWG Agriculture and Rural Development is among rare sector groups where the coordinator for equal opportunities at the lead institutions (MAFWE) is also member of the sector group. In this reporting period, MAFWE used several gender analyses in its activities for policy creation: “Economic Empowerment of Women in Rural Areas: Challenge, opportunity or Unattainable Goal”¹⁸ and “Gender Mainstreaming in Agriculture Policy Impact Assessment”.¹⁹ At the same time, MAFWE used comments put forward in respect to the draft version of the National Strategy on Agriculture and Rural Development 2021-2027.

Finally, according to information obtained by MAFWE, in 2021, IPARD management body worked on developing the draft version of IPARD programme for the period 2021-2027. Priorities defined in respect to programme measures and project selection include additional eligibility points.

¹⁷ EIGE, Glossary and Thesaurus, A-Z Index, available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1359?lang=mk>

¹⁸ Rural Coalition in partnership with the association “My Farm” (2020): Economic Empowerment of Women in Rural Areas: Challenge, Opportunity or Unattainable Goal, available at: <https://bit.ly/3sNI54b>

¹⁹ Analysis developed by the gender equality working group at MAFWE.



FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. SWG Agriculture and Rural Development held only one plenary session in 2021, thereby continuing the practice on very low number of meetings organized at annual level. This dynamics in SWG work is insufficient and rises the need for amending the rules of procedure whereby, in addition to the minimum number of meetings to be organized at annual level, an obligation should be introduced for development of annual work plan that will provide detailed overview of SWG goals and activities planned. Then, the annual plans should be shared and discussed with all SWG members, including civil society representatives.

2. Among others, topics discussed at the plenary session in 2021 concerned the new National Strategy on Agriculture and Rural Development 2021-2027 that will serve as key document for sector policy creation in the next seven years. This approach is one of main goals for which SWGs were established, i.e. to serve as forum for discussion of key sector policies with all stakeholders.

3. Although the three civil society representatives are full-fledged members of SWG Agriculture and Rural Development, the role played by civil society organizations in this sector group is not clearly defined in terms of SWG capacity-building and improving its efficiency. Positive development is observed in the fact that invitations for the only SWG meeting in 2021 were not sent only to CSOs that are members, but also to other civil society organizations and members of the academic community that are not members of this group, but hold relevant expertise in topics of importance for this sector. Hence, changes are needed to the model for selection of civil society representatives, including definition of their role and mandate in SWGs and ensuring participation of CSOs with greatest expertise in topics covered by this sector group.

4. Low transparency in respect to performance of SWG Agriculture and Rural Development continued in 2021 as well. Basic information on this sector working group is not published



on the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy's website, such as documents on its establishment, rules of procedure, etc. At the same time, this website does not host any information on SWG meetings held and decisions taken. Having in mind the importance of topics discussed within this sector group, due consideration should be made of more intensive public activity aimed at information dissemination to stakeholders on SWG performance and results achieved.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ◆ Responses disclosed by the Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy to information requests submitted under the instrument for free access to public information
- ◆ Desk analysis of documents that are relevant for SWG Agriculture and Rural Development and available on websites if MAFWE, ENER, SEA and IPARD
- ◆ Interview with four representatives from MAFWE
- ◆ Interview with representative from civil society organizations that participate in SWG Agriculture and Rural Development

